

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 22, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Obama,

We urge you to request \$15 million for the Food and Drug Administration's National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS) in your Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 budget. Combatting the mounting threat of antibiotic resistance in foodborne pathogens is one of our top priorities, and NARMS is key in this effort.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that two million people develop antibiotic-resistant infections in the United States every year, resulting in at least 23,000 deaths and a cost to our health care system of more than \$20 billion annually. According to the CDC, multi-drug resistance is increasing and the World Health Organization's recent global report on antibiotic resistance declared that antibiotic resistance "is now a major threat to human health." We are particularly concerned by the connection between the current antibiotic use practices in agriculture and rising antibiotic resistance in zoonotic pathogens. Already, the CDC estimates that antibiotic resistant foodborne pathogens cause 430,000 illnesses each year in the United States.

NARMS collects samples of bacteria from animals, meat and poultry products, and human cases of foodborne illness and analyzes them for trends in antibiotic resistance. This important data allows the CDC, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Department of Agriculture to accelerate their response to emerging public health threats. However, due to historic underfunding – only \$7.8 million in FY 2014 – NARMS can only conduct sampling of retail meat in 14 states. The FDA informs us that this level of funding restricts the agency's ability to study trends in antibiotic resistance.

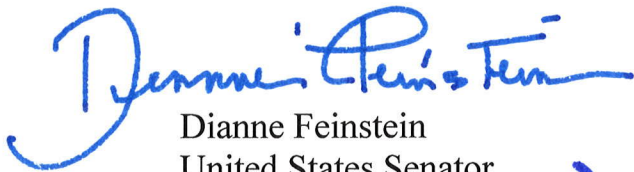
Increasing the funding for NARMS to \$15 million will greatly enhance the program and improve the FDA's ability to study antibiotic resistance. Specifically, providing more funding will allow the FDA to increase the number of samples the agency collects, increase the number of states in which sampling is conducted, and implement advanced molecular detection to improve the agency's analysis of

antibiotic resistant pathogens. This will give the CDC, FDA, and USDA the information needed to implement policies to better protect the public from the threat of antibiotic resistance.

NARMS has also increasingly helped the CDC to detect and investigate foodborne illness outbreaks involving antibiotic resistant pathogens. Early outbreak detection is key in saving lives and reducing the number of foodborne illnesses that occur each year. Most recently, NARMS sampling from a California grocery store helped the CDC link a multidrug resistant *Salmonella* Heidelberg outbreak to Foster Farms chicken. We expect that increased funding for NARMS will also enhance our detection of antibiotic resistant foodborne outbreaks.

Thank you for considering our request. Providing NARMS with \$15 million will significantly improve our public health system and give our public health agencies the tools they need to respond to the threat of antibiotic resistance in foodborne pathogens. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or have your staff contact Tristan Colonius in Senator Feinstein's office at 202-224-2004.

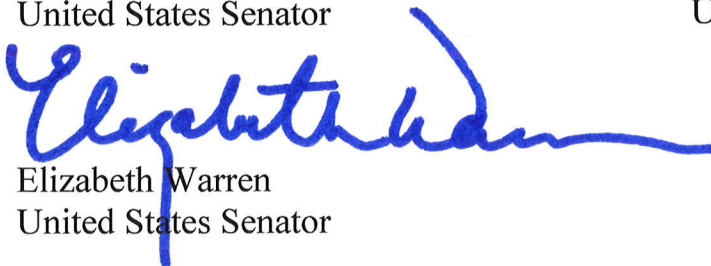
Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Director, Office of Management and Budget

The Honorable Margaret Hamburg
Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration

DF/tc